

Proper Pruning and Tree Care for Trees in the San Antonio Area

Properly pruned and maintained trees add value to our properties. In fact, recent studies indicate that trees add at least 7% to a property's value. In San Antonio, a mature and properly maintained pecan or live oak tree **will** have an appraisal value of \$10,000 or more!

However, improper maintenance can impact our trees' health and create a safety hazard. To ensure that your trees remain assets and not liabilities, prune and care for your trees according to the national standards. The ANSI-A300 Standards are designed to protect the health and beauty of your trees. Following these standards will insure your tree's continued value.



Figure 1: This properly pruned pecan tree has an appraisal value of \$23,452

Five commandments of proper pruning:

- 1. Always prune with a goal** in mind such as improving structure, removing dead or weak branches, eliminating conflict with a building, etc.
- 2. Use the 3 cut pruning method** as shown in Figure 2 which prevents the bark from ripping and insures that the cut is made just outside the collar for the quickest healing without leaving a stub. Stubs are sites for insect pests and decay.
- 3. Never prune more than 25%** of the live canopy at one time. A tree typically needs to be lightly pruned only every 3-4 years.
- 4. Maintain a ratio of 2/3 canopy to 1/3 trunk.**
- 5. Paint all oak wounds** within 30 minutes,

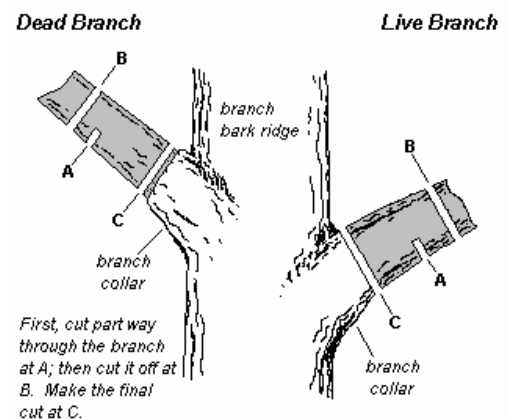
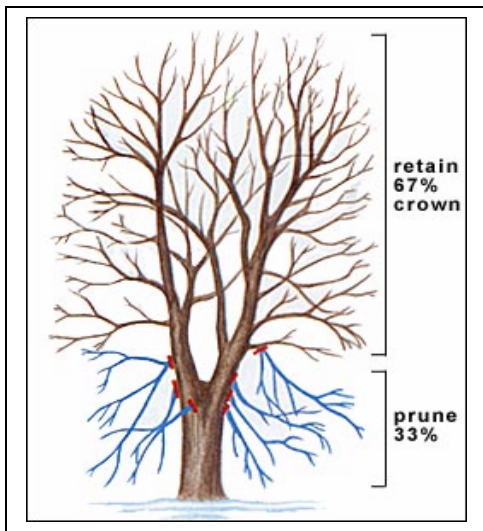
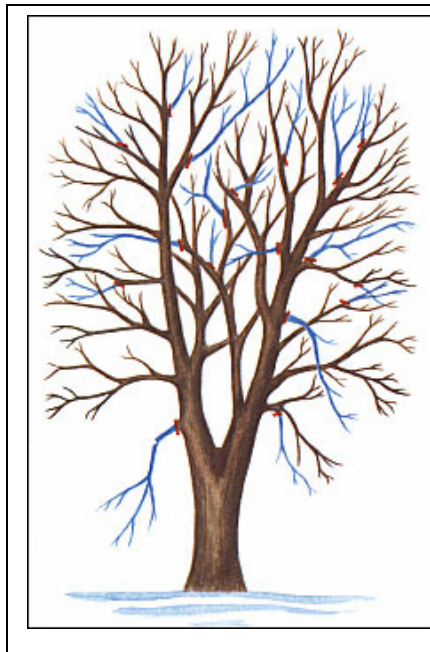


Figure 2: The 3 cut pruning method

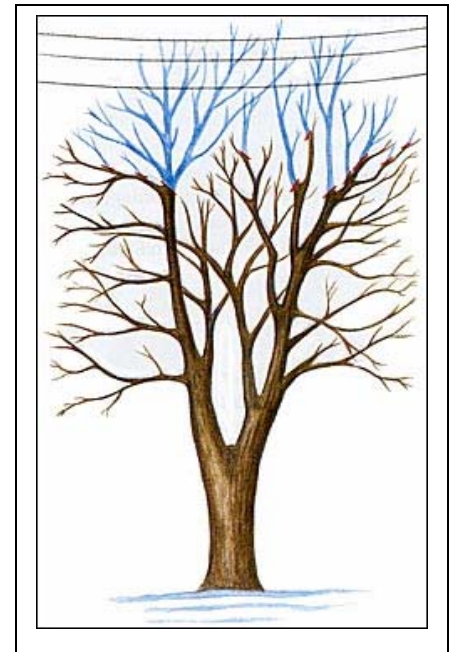
Proper Pruning Techniques



Crown Raising



Crown Thinning



Crown Reduction

Improper Pruning Techniques

Improperly pruned trees can reduce a tree's health and increase liabilities. Below are examples of improper pruning that can be found in the San Antonio area.

"Lion Tailing" is the practice of pruning the interior branches. This technique removes too much of the live tree canopy and weakens the tree. The tree will compensate by re-growing multiple little branches up and down the remaining branches (epicormic branching) trying to re-establish a canopy large enough to support the existing root system. "Lion Tailing" leaves branches with all of the weight on the end which increases chance of branch failure especially in high winds or ice.

Figure 3: "Lion Tailing" pruning interior branches causes branches to break more easily.





"Topping" is cutting back on large branches so that most of the tree canopy has been removed. This technique removes too much of the live tree canopy and weakens the tree. The tree will compensate by re-growing multiple little branches at the end of the stubbed branches, trying to re-establish a canopy large enough to support the existing root system. These small branches are weakly attached and prone to breakage. Also the wounds at the end of the large remaining branches do not heal well and often become a point of decay which can move through the branch and into the trunk. Such decay rots the interior of the tree causing it to fail.

Figures 4 and 5: "Topping" cuts most of the canopy leaving the tree with poor structure and subject to decay and failure.



Figure 6: "Broccoli Topping" removes lower canopy.

"Broccoli Topping" stripping all smaller/lower branches which removes too much of the live canopy and weakens the tree. The tree will compensate by re-growing multiple little branches up and down the remaining branches (epicormic branching), to re-establish a canopy large enough to support the existing root system. Also "Broccoli Topping" will leave branches with all of the weight on the end which increases the chance of branch failure especially in high winds and ice.



Figure 7: "Leaving Stubs" are points for insects and decay infestation and a source of multiple new weak branches.

Tree Care Techniques



Figures 7, 8 & 9: Protect trees from sunscald by leaving a "trashy" trunk with small branches or trunk wrap as to the right. It is best to not stake new trees, but if they are staked, be sure to remove after first season so as to not "girdle" the tree.



Figure 10: "Volcano" mulching will cause trunk decay. Leave 1-2" air space



Figure 11: Plant near utility lines a minimum of 20 ft from the lines for large maturing trees such as an oak or if closer plant a tree that will not grow more than 25

